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The Story of Coatlalupej

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Presented to the children of The Morning Star, a small school for small children in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

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Appear to be photocopied.

Mary was a poet and healer who lived across the street from the little school.

She was married to Fred Wolf, a chiropractor. He did his healing work in the downstairs of their home. She did her healing work over a cup of tea, while Fred's patients waited their turn on the couch in the living room.

She also presented the school with 38 pages of poems, typed originals.

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As we were planning to visit this shrine in Mexico City, it was my desire to become informed about the Virgin of Guadalupe, Patroness of Mexico, who had appeared to a native convert to Christianity in the early sixteenth century. Reading her story in "A Woman Clothed with the Sun" and finding the phrase "Stone Serpent Trodden On", set me on an adventure which could prove to be a link between the shrine of Guadalupe and the Mayan archeological ruins near Mérida, Yucatan that had been the goal of our journey to Mexico this time.

As a preface to the search, it is at this time interesting to explore the Holy Bible to determine the role the serpent has played since creation. In the beginning all living things were blessed, but after the fall of man the serpent was cursed. To any sort of serpent was given the Hebrew name "nachash" as a general term which is synonymous with dragon, devil or Satan and which is the adversary Leviathan in the book of Job. This creeping animal is the disguise for a being which is hostile to God and an enemy to man.

During the exodus from Egypt when the people of Israel were speaking against their God and complaining to Moses about their hardships, fiery serpents were allowed to bite them, causing many to die. When these people turned to Moses for help, Yahweh told him to make a brass serpent and to put it on a pole. Then all those who were bitten and looked at the serpent were healed immediately. Thus from this tool for removing fear and panic from people's minds grew a symbol to be worshipped until the time of Hezekiah who in his zeal smashed this brazen effigy in order to bring the descendants of David back to their Lord.

When Jesus Christ was teaching, he gave to his seventy disciples whom he sent out the power to tread on serpents without harm. Those who believed in Him were given the power to take up serpents in his name.

When sending his twelve apostles out Jesus said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless

as doves."

St. Paul told his followers, "but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil (innocent of what is bad). And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

This was in reference to the Old Testament curse, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

It is interesting to find this quotation symbolized when observing the paintings of Mary rendered by the old Master artists. Generally a serpent was put beneath her feet. This became a reality when Mary appeared in Mexico.

To develop the background for the theme of this message I have chosen the archeological ruins of Uxmal which are an example of pure Mayan architectural style unspoiled by subsequent civilizations or cultures. They beautifully exemplify the importance of the serpent in stylized designs on the buildings. The ruins of Chichen Itza show the Toltec influence superimposed upon them, while the pyramids of the sun and the moon at Teotihuacan near Mexico City were of Toltec origin changed by Aztec influence.

The oldest idea that Señor Jose Diaz-Bolio (author of various guides and articles about the Mayans) can link to the culture of these ancient people is the belief that the "crotolus durissus durissus" or Yucatanean rattlesnake had the ability to count time. They believed that it shed its skin annually and added one rattle each year. To them it became a religious symbol--a solar snake whereby the procession of the years could be seen. From this single idea the serpent became the main symbol of Meso-American civilizations. Shedding its skin meant regeneration--"caput zihil" as the ancient Mayan would say it. The new rattle held the secret of new life.

As with many visionaries, Diaz-Bolio's ideas don't necessarily agree with those who claim authority on certain subjects. Anthropologists and archeologists

will ridicule some of his conclusions concerning this species of rattlesnake. The 4-vertex canamayte diagram of proportion which was the design or pattern on the skin of this snake of the Yucatan or Mayan area, he states, is the basis for the mathematics, geometry, architecture, the moon's phases, the sun's movements, the proportions of the human face and body; and the plan, proportion and profile of a pyramid. To the Mayan this serpent represented the sun, the moon, fire, water, regeneration, the arts, wisdom, science, religion, cosmology, mathematics and architectural style--"the idea of cosmic order amidst chaos--the divine spirit putting order in things both terrestial and celestial." To them this creature was a religious being--the creator, the former. Zamná was the name of this early god of the people of Uxmal. He was the pattern for the god Culculcan and for Quetzalcoatl the god of the cult that originated in Tula, the ancient Toltec capitol. The term feathered serpent is the English interpretation of the word Quetzalcoatl. The feathered aspect seems to portray the rays of the sun, probably because the later Mayans, the Olmecs, the Toltecs, the Aztecs and other cultures believed that this rattlesnake was an incarnation of the sun as is shown in the Aztec calendar stone.

By the time of the Aztecs who were ruled by Moctezuma and who were living in Tenochtitlan, the island in the center of the lake, when the Spanish explorers came, the symbol and the unknown teacher using the serpent as his tool had become one, personified as a bearded white man named Quetzalcoatl who would return. Thus the Spaniards were able to conquer Moctezuma and his people. The feathered serpent god personifying a great teacher now through the Aztec priests demanded human sacrifice--jewel-bedecked, cross-eyed virgin maidens thrown alive into wells, the carving out of human hearts and other atrocities. Such was the religious background of Juan Diego and his uncle Juan Bernardino before their conversion by the Spanish Fathers.

Now once again we find that a symbol, rather than being accepted as a tool for furthering the message, has become an object of veneration because those to

whom it was given were unable to see or to hear the story it told or to comprehend the hidden meaning or significance. Millions of natives were baptized because of the sign and without realizing the message that Mary had brought to the Aztec people of Mexico in the month of December, 1531. It was told by her to Juan Bernardino, the uncle of Juan Diego, as he lay ill while his nephew was carrying the signs to the Bishop at the nearby village of Tlaltelolco. The signs were the living roses from a barren hill and the image of the Holy Mother on Juan Diego's tilma (Aztec garment), proving to them that the Virgin in the form of a young native girl had really appeared to him and had asked for a church to be built at the place where she had appeared, so that she could show her compassion to those who were to come to her for help. Today millions come annually to this shrine in Mexico City, many walking on their knees in adoration across the plaza and down the aisles of the church.

The desecration of the civilized world has not missed this sacred shrine. Adjoining the church on the hill are shops where one may purchase ice cream cones, candy bars, postal cards and souvenirs, while money boxes are placed conspicuously in the Basilica and the church for contributions.

Five miles north of what had been Tenochtitlan the present center of Mexico City, the place of a temple to the mother-goddess of the Aztecs had been on Tepeyac hill. At the foot of this hill is the Basilica of Guadalupe. Above its altar is the awesomely beautiful image of Mary, framed behind glass as a picture with a jewelled crown above it, still seen on the tilma just as it looked when the Bishop first saw it. It is said that the colors have not faded throughout the years, the splendor of the image portrayed in softly muted tones that defy analysis by skilled artists.

Above, on the hill where Mary appeared, reached now by a stairway winding through a garden, is a church. On the walls life-sized murals portray the story

of her appearance to Juan Diego and to his uncle Juan Bernardino along with the presentation of the roses and the viewing of the image on the garment by the Bishop.

The message the Holy Mother brought to Juan's uncle as she told him her name was "STONE SERPENT TRODDEN ON". This was the meaning in the name Santa Maria tetcoatlaxopeuh as heard by Aztec ears or coatlalupej in the Nahuatl dialect, as pronounced by the descendants of the Aztecs. To the ears of the Spanish people who heard the word, the sound in their language was Guadalupe, the river of the wolf, which already had a religious significance to them in Spain. Thus was a message lost as soon as it was heard. Lost was the realization of the triumph of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Mother, over the feathered serpent god.

Time passes and one realizes that its movement is in cycles. At a glance, it seems that the serpent is returning to Mexico. Portrayed by the muralist Juan O'Gorman, Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent god of beneficence and plenty, dominates the mural on the outside of the northern wall of the central library building at the University of Mexico. Diego Rivera has used the serpent on the Olympic Stadium as the base for his mural. His entire work rests on the undulating body of Quetzalcoatl. Native dancers with plumed headdresses can be seen almost daily performing in the plazas before the cathedral and the Guadalupe shrine. They dance to the rhythm of the serpent's rattle. We heard that the descendants of the original people of Mexico are looking for the return of their own religion.

But wait, there is a light gleaming in the darkness. Amidst the chaos, the change, the uncertainty, the birth-pangs of the new Age, it appears that the miracle of Mary's appearance to man is taking place again. The image of the Holy Mother is being realized by the Brotherhood of the Holy Order of Mans as they strive to emulate her attributes so that her Son may be enthroned in their pure hearts.

Whether they are tears of compassion or a blessing being given to the parched earth, it is said that rain is associated with many appearances of Mary. On the afternoon of January 21, 1975 (not during the rainy season) as we approached the church on the hill, a soft rain began to fall and as we descended and crossed the plaza below, rain poured down as we hurried towards shelter. We heard that the valley around Mexico City hadn't had rain for six months. That night snow fell also on the high places around the city. Was Mary visiting once again this holy place while we were there?

Bibliography

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Numbers 21:4-9
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Matthew 10:16
Mark 16:18
Luke 10:19
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Jerusalem Bible footnotes about serpents

"Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico", by E.C. Eliot in "A Woman Clothed with the Sun", edited by J.J. Delaney

"Instructive Guide to the Ruins of Uxmal--the City of the Feathered Serpent", by Jose Diaz-Bolio

There have been many people throughout the Ages of Man who have been chosen to carry a message. There are others who find the message, decipher it and then carry it further with a new light, as followers of the Way and channels of the Master.

To this servant has been given the vision to decipher the message of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Coatlalupej) in its relationship to the Feathered Serpent of the ancient Mayans of Uxmal--the god Quetzalcoatl venerated by the succeeding civilizations of Mexico.

This mystery has been brought to the light solely by the grace of God and to the glory of his Son and in the name of Mary the Holy Mother.

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